Araştırma Makalesi ● Research Article

The 2012 Tuareg-Arab Uprising in Northern Mali and Regional Actors: The Impact of Libya and Algeria

Mali'nin Kuzeyinde Tuareg-Arap Ayaklanması ve Bölgesel Aktörler: Libya ve Cezayir'in Etkisi

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Öz: Sahel'de güvenlik ve istikrarı tehdit eden temel çatışmalardan biri olan Mali'nin kuzeyindeki Tuareg-Arap ayaklanması 2015 Cezayir Barış Antlaşmasına rağmen günümüzde de devam etmektedir. Söz konusu krizin hem gelişiminde hem de çözüm çalışmalarında bölgesel aktörleri rolleri göz ardı edilemez önemdedir. Bu makale, Mali'de 2012 yılında başlayıp günümüzde ise yeniden şiddetlenerek devam eden krizin gelişimini Libya ve Cezayir'in bölgesel politikaları üzerinden incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. İki ülkenin de güney şehirlerinde çok sayıda Tuareg kabilesinin yaşaması, Mali'deki krizle yakından ilgilenip sürece dahil olmalarına neden olmuştur. Libya'nın devrik lideri Muammer Kaddafi, pan-afrikanist politikaları çerçevesinde Tuareg toplumunun en büyük destekçisi olmuştur. 1980'lerde Libya'ya sığınan Tuareg gençleri daha sonra ülkelerine dönüp 1990 ayaklanmasını başlatmakla kalmamış, bu süreç 2012 ayaklanmasının temellerini de oluşturmuştu. Tuaregler'in ruhani babası olarak Kaddafi'nin 2011'deki ani ölümü de Mali'nin kuzeyindeki 2012 isyanının temel sebepleri arasında gösterilmektedir. Öte yandan güney şehirlerinde yoğun Tuareg nüfusu bulunduran Cezayir ise yalnızca 2012 isyanında değil 1960'lardan itibaren Mali'de yaşanan ayaklanmalarda arabuluculuk görevini üstlenmiş ve 2015 yılında Mali'de Barış ve Uzlaşma Anlaşması'na ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Bu makale, söz konusu krize dair çalışmaların çoğunlukla uluslararası aktörlere odaklanmış olmasına rağmen literatürde yeterince yer bulamayan Mağrip-Sahel ilişkilerini bölgesel bir perspektiften mercek altına alması açısından önemlidir. Mali krizi etrafında bölgesel göç, Sahel jeopolitiği ve güvenlik meselelerine ek olarak post kolonyal bir perspektiften trans nasyonal kimlikler, azınlık sorunları ve bölgesel göç meselelerine değinmesi bölgeye dair kapsamlı bir anlayış sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tuaregler, Mali, Libya, Cezayir, Sahel, Ayaklanma

Abstract: Despite the peace agreement signed in Algeria in 2015, the Tuareg-Arab uprising in northern Mali is still one of the main conflicts that threaten security and stability in the Sahel. Regional actors played an undeniable role both in the development of the crisis and in the solution attempts. For this reason, this article aims to examine the development of the crisis that started in Mali in 2012 and continues today through the regional policies of Libya and Algeria. The fact that many Tuareg tribes lived in the southern cities of both countries caused them to be closely involved in the crisis in Mali and to be involved in the process. Muammar Gaddafi, the former leader of Libya, has been the biggest supporter of the Tuareg society within the framework of his pan-Africanist policies. The Tuareg youth who took refuge in Libya in the 1980s not only returned to their country and started the 1990 uprising, but also laid the foundations for the 2012 uprising. As the spiritual father of Tuaregs, Gaddafi's sudden death in 2011 is also cited as one of the main reasons for the 2012 rebellion in northern Mali. On the other hand, Algeria, which has a large Tuareg population in its southern cities, acted as a mediator not only in the 2012 uprising

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but also in the uprisings in Mali since the 1960s. They hosted the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali in 2015. This article is important in that it examines Maghreb-Sahel relations from a regional perspective, which cannot find enough space in the literature where existing studies on the crisis mostly focus on international actors. By evaluating transnational identities, minority issues and regional migration from a postcolonial perspective in supplement to political mobilization and regional security issues around the Mali crisis, this paper will provide a comprehensive understanding of the region.

Keywords: Tuaregs, Mali, Libya, Algeria, Sahel, Insurrection

Introduction

The Tuareg-Arab insurgency in northern Mali, which began in 2012, was a complex conflict involving various factors and actors. Although the conflict is mostly known as the Tuareg uprising, the Arab tribes living in the northern regions suffering from the same problems also played important roles in the rebellion. As a nomadic ethnic group, the Tuareg people had long-standing grievances from being discriminated and marginalized in their home for decades not only by the Malian government but also by the colonizers before the independence of the country. Besides, there are several factors that fueled the Tuareg rebellion including the spread of radical Islamist ideology in the Sahel, the proliferation of weapons and the intervention of external actors both regional and international. As Libya and Algeria are two main actors with significant impact on the regional scale this article explores their role in the 2012 Tuareg insurgency in northern Mali.

The Tuareg society is a Sahelian nomadic ethnic group that lived a life mostly away from the concept of borders in the region for centuries. The Tuareg people have lived freely in the Sahara Desert without borders, yet with the decolonization they found themselves divided in the borders of Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya, and Burkina Faso. In Ottoman sources, Tuaregs are described as the dominant people of the region who provided protection and guidance services to the trade caravans that would pass through the Sahara Desert from the 14th to the end of the 19th century (Kavas, 2015). In some records, it is described that the caravans that entered the Sahara without the protection of any Tuareg tribe could never leave the desert, but these people, who were recorded as the lords of the desert, could enter from one end of the desert and exit from the other even with their eyes closed (Kurşun 2015). According to the French sources of the 19th century, who illustrate them as *les hommes blues* (the blue men), it was recorded that the Tuaregs showed serious resistance to colonization. In the same sources, the warrior and rebel character of them was emphasized. Moreover, it is claimed that the Tuareg resistances delayed the Pax-Gallica, which France wanted to create by uniting its colonial lands in the Sahel, until 1934 (Aouad-Badoual, 2014: 35-48). All these sources agree that Tuaregs are fond of their independence as a nomadic society with a prominent warrior character. The majority of *les hommes blues* are still retaining these characteristics and are not familiar with the concept of the border.

One of the main reasons why the Tuaregs are still far from the concept of border is the fact that this society, despite has been living independently and in their own order for centuries, suddenly came under the control of another state, moreover that their lands were divided by "artificial" borders during the decolonization period (Brooke-Smith 1987). During French colonialism, the warrior identity was removed from the Tuaregs and given to the Bambaras, who were the biggest ethnic group in Mali with other important roles. While the Bambaras had the right to be educated in the modern schools (*les écoles de république*) established under colonial rule and to receive treatment in hospitals, the Tuaregs were deprived of even these basic rights. As a punishment for their rebellious character, they were forced to serve the Bambaras, who were more suitable for a sedentary life and more manageable for the colonizers (Maïga and Singaré 2018). When the Republic of Mali declared its independence in 1960 and the foundations of the state were laid, the Tuaregs lacked an educated elite to represent them and defend their rights. Although they did not have a say in the decisions taken, they remained in the same position as second-class citizens after independence. The Tuareg society, angered by the fact that independence had no positive effect on their lives and the frustration of being deprived of even the most basic rights, started the Alfellega uprising in 1962 (Lecocq and Klute 2019).

Roots of the Tuareg insurgency in Northern Mali

Having a long history of discrimination and marginalization where they reside as minorities, the Tuareg society has often been at odds with the central governments of all five countries where they have been divided. In this study, the Tuaregs of Mali have been fighting to obtain equal rights with other ethnic groups such as the Bambaras but also for greater autonomy and recognition for several decades. In order to obtain these, periodic uprisings occurred in 1962-1963, 1990-1995, and 2007-2009 (Grémont 2010; Triaud 1993). The 2012 uprising did not emerge out of a moment's anger or panic but was the result of a long-term frustration rooted in Mali's pre-independence era. The Tuareg society, which has been humiliated for generations by seen as a second-class citizen, started the 1963 uprising in order to obtain basic rights. However, the ongoing demonstrations in Kidal were brutally suppressed in 1963 and resulted in a serious increase in pressure on minorities.

A few years after the first unsuccessful rebellion, in the 1970s, severe drought-related famines began to occur that affected the entire Sahel region. The continuation of the drought in the 1980s led to an increase in poverty in the region, where life was already difficult, while minority groups such as Tuaregs were most affected by the harsh living conditions. As a result, among the Tuareg majority cities Gao and Kidal became the regions most affected by the crisis with unemployment rates three times higher than the rest of the country (Barbet 2015) 60. Although it created funds from foreign aid to combat the economic crisis in the northern cities, the inability of these funds to reach the public worsened the situation. Because, during the 1974 drought, thousands of CFA aid sent to medium and small businesses were embezzled by the National Liberation Military Committee (CMLN)(Bamako 2022), and the aid plan was delayed for 16 years until the Tamansarret Agreement in 1991, ignoring the food shortage in the north (Barbet 2015).

One of the greatest challenges for the Sahel region in the 1980s was the rising unemployment rate among the young populations in addition to famine and poverty. Clotilde Barbet summarizes the developments of the drought period as *"...in the 1980s, unemployment was such that many young Ishumar Tuaregs decided to go to Algeria and then to Libya, to find a job in the oil industry or enlist in the ranks of the Libyan army"* (Barbet 2015). It was particularly important that this region was almost completely economically neglected until Mali's democratic transition in the 1990s (Morgan 2012). Meanwhile, Algeria, which was struggling with political internal turmoil, was reluctant to get involved in the problems of its neighbors. However, serious economic breakthroughs were being made in Libya under the rule of Muammar Gaddafi, who came to power with the 1969 coup. Despite being affected by the global oil crisis in the 1980s and the American embargo, the economic development of Libya continued to slowly accelerate thanks to the development of the oil and trade sectors. Gaddafi's expansionist ambitions as a regional power transformed his country into a safe haven for the Tuareg youth who were struggling with hunger in their own country.

Libyan effect on the Malian conflict

Libya's role the Tuareg insurgency in northern Mali was more indirect than Algeria's, but no less significant. The repercussions of the civil war that broke out in Libya in 2011 and the murder of Muammar Gaddafi in 2012 were felt more in Mali than in its direct border neighbors, Algeria and Niger. The fall of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 led to the proliferation of weapons in the region, including heavy weaponry such as anti-aircraft missiles, that were used by the Tuareg rebels in their fight against the Malian government. Tuaregs, who took refuge in Libya during Gaddafi's rule and were integrated to a mercenary army called the Islamic legion by the late dictator, (Galy 2013: P.29) had to return to their country due to the turmoil in 2011. After the death of late Libyan dictator more than 1500 heavily armed and trained Tuareg fighters who had previously served in Gaddafi's Islamic Legion returned to Mali (Caparini 2015). In other words, for Mali the fall of Gaddafi meant that thousands of young armed militants who had fled the country after playing a role in previous rebellions entered its territory, having undergone military training.

Alex Braithwaite mentions five key factors that make states vulnerable to spread of conflict. According to Braithwaite, a country is vulnerable to the emergence of conflict without sovereignty

integrity, financial resources, loyal and capable officials, stable administrative-military control, and authority and institutional mechanisms to use resources (Braithwaite 2006). As one of the states most affected by the collapse of Libya, Mali was a weak state in all of these. While Mopti became an invisible border dividing the south and north of the country, bribery had become a serious problem in the whole of Mali. Although the northern regions lacked financial support, military protection, and state authority to respond to the demands of the people of the region for many years. The central government's indifference towards the North made them see Gaddafi's Libya as the savior of poor and oppressed societies, which opened its doors to the Sahel Tuaregs, who were afraid of dying before they could reach Europe. Tuaregs in the Sahel countries saw Gaddafi's Libya as "the savior of the poor and oppressed". (Fischer and Kohl 2010).

As it will be demonstrated in following parts, Libya opened its doors to thousands of asylum seekers young *Ishumar* Tuareg in the 1980s, after which the vast majority of these young people underwent military training and turned into regular armed units. The former leader of Libya had not opened his doors to thousands of young refugees for no reason. Tuareg's youth, whom he praised for their warrior qualities, benefited greatly in strengthening Gaddafi's regime. Young Tuaregs served to protect Libya's interests in both Africa and the Middle East until Gaddafi switched to pan-Africanist policy and abandoned pan-Islamism in 1990. These youths, returning from Libya, became key players in the outbreak of the 1990 revolt, which caused the death of more than 1,000 people and the displacement of more than 250,000 people (Ronen 2013). The instability in Libya has increased the pressure in the Sahel, resulting in significant refugee flows and reverse migration as Malian migrants flee the conflict. It also created a power vacuum in the south of the country, which allowed radical jihadist groups to expand their influence area The collapse of security in Libya has allowed large numbers of weapons to be looted by immigrants, many of whom had worked for Gaddafi's security forces, and fall into the hands of militant groups in the Sahel (Shaw 2013).

Algeria's role in the Tuareg insurgency

From a historical point of view, the Algerian impact on the resolution of Tuareg conflicts in Mali has persisted for decades. Since the 1963 uprising, Algeria has been a third party in the problems between Bamako and Tuareg society as a mediator. During the negotiations for peace between the Malian government and Tuareg rebel factions, Algeria played a significant role as a mediator and supported the Malian government militarily and logistically. However, the role of Algeria in the 2012 Tuareg insurgency was more complex. It is apparent that Algiers was concerned about the rise of Islamist radicalism in the Sahel region as well as how the Malian conflict might affect Algerian security. Consequently, Algeria was increasingly involved in the conflict both militarily and diplomatically (Arieff 2012).

AQIM was one of the main armed groups in the region and the product of the 1991-2002 civil war in Algeria. Due to its military setbacks in northern Algeria, a part of the terrorist group moved to Algeria's far south and into northern Mali (Caparini 2015). In fact, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat, GSPC), founded by Algerian jihadist Hassan Hattab in 1998, was renamed AQIM in 2007, aiming to assume a new identity (Galy 2013: P.140). The Algerian Department of Intelligence and Security has been considered as the most eligible and experienced in the region for counter-terrorist operations especially in the fight against AQIM. This makes Algeria a key partner in the region for international actors regarding the steps to be taken in the fight against terrorism (Lagatta et al. 2013). Not only in military matters and counter-terrorism operations but also in peace talks their role is irreplaceable. Algeria was one of the key players in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement in June 2013, which established a ceasefire between the Malian government and Tuareg rebel groups. The Algerian government also took the lead in the creation of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) in order to support the Malian government in its battle against the rebels. Additionally, Algeria assisted in training Malian soldiers and offered military and intelligence support to the Malian government (Lagatta et al., 2013).

The fact is that the 2012 crisis in Mali was a serious threat to Algeria's two priorities in foreign affairs: preventing the spread of terrorist movements in the Sahel and eradicating separatist movements. Moreover, as the refugee crisis would emerge as a costly problem to deal with Algiers had to step forward to mediation (Arieff, 2012). It should not be forgotten that Tuareg and Berber tribes lived in the southern cities of Algeria and an influx of refugees from Mali could have a negative impact on these communities that had not shown separatist tendencies until then (Mesa 2022: P.119). Although they did not have a problem comparable to separatist movements in the southern regions, Algeria's long-term struggle with radical Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) continued (Filiu, 2009). In January, as the conflicts intensified in northern Mali, it was revealed that Algiers was following a pattern. As the strength of the Tuareg insurrection increased, Algerians called for an immediate cease-fire and positioned themselves as a mediator as a way to preserve the territorial integrity of Mali (Arieff, 2012). On 24 June, Algeria's Minister for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel and UK Foreign Secretary for Middle Eastern and North African Affairs Alistair Burt held a joint press conference in Algiers. While Messahel drew attention to the importance of dialogue and a political solution in peacebuilding; Burt also praised Algeria's mediation and stated that military intervention was considered as the last option for the sake of Mali (AFP, 2012). Meanwhile, Algeria-US military and strategic cooperation in the early 2000s was strengthening. As it was an important factor that threatened Libya's interests in the Sahel and Maghreb, keeping strong relations with Tuaregs and other minorities of the region had become crucial for Muammar Gaddafi (Ronen, 2013).

The 2012 Insurgency in Northern Mali

As a result of their research covering the conflicts of 1960-1999, Collier and Hoeffler suggested that conflict is likely to arise when there are favorable conditions in a region. Some of these conditions are inequality, ethnic or religious discrimination, rights violations, economic and security problems (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). When the past of northern Mali was examined, almost all these conditions are met especially for the Tuareg society. Moreover, the increasing instability and terror in the Sahel in recent years have paved the way for large-scale upheavals.

Even though for the Tuareg society, an uprising has become a recurring event every few decades, the 2012 uprising differs from its predecessors in many respects. Firstly, this one was better organized, more violent, and more sustained than previous uprisings. As a result, the rebels were able to capture several key cities and towns in northern Mali, including Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu (Lecocq and Klute 2019: P. 42-43). Secondly, the proliferation of weapons in the Sahel, particularly those left over from the 2011 Libyan civil war was directly linked with the insurgency. Thirdly, the spread of radical Islamist ideology with the new actors arrived in the region in 2002 was one other reason. These Islamist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Ad-dine had convinced the Tuareg rebels to join them in their fight against the Malian government (Mesa 2022 : P.102-104).

Since 2002, smuggling in the region has increased 60-fold, which is one of the structural reasons for 2012 (Ki Moon, 2012), the poverty that engulfed the north as a result of the peace provided after the 1990 rebellion, and the consumption of the development budgets dedicated to the north for the construction of barracks and the purchase of weapons and the proliferation of new armed groups while lacking of police and state presence in the region. On the one hand, it did not make the situation easier for the locals, who were left in a vulnerable situation without safety of life against terrorist groups, and on the other hand, the fact that only income opportunities had become illegal activities related to terrorism in the face of increasing famine and poverty (Shaw, 2013).

In the early 2000s, terrorist groups that advocated radical Islamist ideology had begun to settle in the region. It has been noted that the main economic activities of these groups were smuggling and kidnapping like their counterparts around the world. The situation was so complicated that the northern lands of Mali became a center for crimes such as arms, drugs, and human trafficking. On the other hand, Malian Sahara turned into an arena where many contradictory events such as development operations, bribery and international aid took place (Galy 2013 : P. 93). In 2008, it is stated by the AQIM Amir

Abdelmalek Droukdel, "*AQIM's increasingly empowered political, religious and economic presence in the Sahel region further enhanced the group's ability to attract marginalized Sahelian recruits along with Maghrebian ones, filling its ranks with 'a considerable number of Libyans, Moroccans, Tunisians, Mauritanians, Malians and Nigeriens'* "(Ronen 2013: P.551). This means that the influence of radical organizations that started recruiting militants from both Sahel and Maghreb countries was increasing, threatening regional security even more.

While insecurity in the region increased with the influence of radical groups, many of the Tuaregs who took refuge in Libya in the 1980s were now preparing to return to their countries. Many of the key figures of the 2012 uprising were those who returned from Libya after 2009 with weapons, money and training (Shaw, 2013). These well-educated young names did not choose the violence directly unlike the radicals. They first sought to create a political mechanism in order to achieve their goals. The leadership team, which consists of people educated in Western countries as well as in Maghreb countries such as Morocco, Algeria and Libya, established the MNA in 2010 to voice their demands for autonomy in the north of Mali. The group, led by Bilal Ag Acherif and Mohamed Ag Ghali, established National Movement of Azawad (MNA) in 2010 in Timbuktu, to voice their demands for autonomy in northern Mali (Lecocq and Klute, 2019, P. 41). The fall of Muammar Gaddafi in August 2011 led to the return of thousands of heavily armed Tuareg youth, which includes former *Alliance Touarègue du Nord Mali pour le Changement* (ATNMC) Malian rebels, to Mali and the birth of the armed wing of the independence movement founded by the MNA. On 16 October 2011, the MNA and the Tuareg Movement in Northern Mali (*Mouvement touareg du Nord-Mali*, MTNM) merged to form the *Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA) (Maïga and Singaré 2018: P.204-207).

Iyad Ag Ghali, who commanded the rebel Tuareg forces in the 1990s and 2000s, was at the forefront of the radicalization. Ag Ghali, who adopted the mentality of AQIM, founded the armed organization Ansar Dine in 2011 with the ideology of bringing sharia to Mali, but in 2012 he could not get the support to win the management of neither the MNLA nor his own tribe, the Ifoghas (Shaw, 2013). In March 2017, to form the Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) coalition Ansar Dine merged with other Mali-based jihadist groups the Katiba Macina, the Katiba al-Furqan (the Saharan branch of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), and al Mourabitoun (*Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 2021). Although the French forces gained the upper hand against the JNIM during the Barkan operation and largely prevented their expansion, the radicals quickly began to regroup with the French withdrawal from Mali in 2022.

As another powerful jihadist group in Mali the Mouvement pour l'Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) was founded, in October 2011, by Ahmed el-Tilemsi and Hamad al-Khairy, who left AQIM. Their first activity as a terrorist organization was to kidnap European aid workers from a refugee camp in southern Algeria. Taking advantage of the chaos caused by the military coup in Mali in January 2012, they captured a large area around Gao. In order to achieve all these, it was claimed that they received security support from the Qataris while settling in Gao. Some sources assert that this might be a result of the energy and regional policy tensions between Algeria and Doha (Arieff, 2012). Although the regions in which they were strong were different from the JNIM, the withdrawal of France meant strengthening again for MUJAO. The withdrawal of an international actor as important as France from the region means that regional actors have to take more responsibility and take stronger steps due to the increase of importance of their roles.

Conclusions

Since the conflict in northern Mali has a critical role in a complex dynamic that threatens security in the region, both regional and international actors have taken intense steps for its solution. Under the leadership of the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) many countries have been actively engaged in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts such as taking part of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and G5 Sahel (Aubry, 2019; Benantar, 2019). French-led military operation Barkhane and the deployment of the MINUSMA have provided the

necessary platform for international actors to be part of the peace process. With the help with Algeria and Libya, regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have also been involved in peace talks between parties to the conflict in northern Mali (Poupart, 2017). These efforts emphasize the need of recognizing the conflict's regional repercussions and the importance of collaboration for the solution.

Despite efforts of international and regional actors on a resolution of the Malian conflict challenges of peacebuilding still remains. One of the key obstacles is the conflict's complex nature, which is marked by long-rooted ethnic, political and economic grievances of the minorities. The existence of armed radical terrorist groups in the region hinders the path to a long-term solution. Additionally, the lack of state presence and insufficient governmental organisms are the obstacles to the prevention of human and weapons trafficking, drug trafficking, and inter-communal conflicts in the region. Addressing these challenges in northern Mali requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates security and development strategies.

Libya and Algeria's approaches to Tuareg uprisings in northern Mali and the policies they implemented since the 1960s show significant differences. Moreover, it is not possible to correctly interpret the problems experienced in the Sahel region today without analyzing the policies of these two countries during the development of the crisis in question. However, it will not be possible to transfer recent or any original information only by reinterpreting existing studies in the literature. Although the interviews with both important figures among the separatists and pro-state during the fieldwork conducted in Bamako in 2022, as a part of ongoing thesis research, were the most challenging part of the research, they contributed significantly to the targeted correct interpretation and originality.

Notwithstanding the challenges, Northern Mali has the potential for long-term peace and stability. Recently negotiations resumed between the transitional government and the CSP-PSD (Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development) for implementation of the ongoing peace agreement, Algiers Accord, which provides the groundwork for resolving the conflict and addressing its root causes. While it requires a lot of effort and time to implement the agreement signed in 2015, it promises hope for a sustainable peace for the parties. Although there is still mutual distrust between the parties to the conflict, the steps to be taken by the mediating third parties to clear these doubts are critical. Aware of its power over both Bamako and separatist groups, Algeria, as a reliable actor, contribute to peacebuilding through mediation, while instability in Libya remains a threat to regional security. Ultimately, the possibility of achieving sustainable peace in Northern Mali, where there has been no mass conflict other than terrorist attacks by extremists after 2015, depends on the commitment, persistence and cooperation of both local and international actors.

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